

VLR-10/9/91 NRHP-8/18/92

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name CHESTERFIELD COUNTY COURTHOUSE AND COURTHOUSE SQUAREother names/site number DHR File No. 20-227

2. Location

street & number North side SR-10, 350' from int. with SR 655 N/A ☐ not for publicationcity, town Chesterfield N/A ☐ vicinitystate Virginia code VA county Chesterfield code 0 zip code 23832

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- ☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> objects
<u>6</u>	<u>4</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Director, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

May 8, 1992

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: CourthouseGovernment officeCorrectional facilityLANDSCAPE: PlazaRECREATION AND CULTURE: Monument/marker

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE: PlazaGOVERNMENT: Government officeRECREATION AND CULTURE: Monument/marker
Museum**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:Colonial RevivalEARLY REPUBLIC: FederalLATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK; STONE: Granitewalls BRICK; STONE: Graniteroof STONE: Slate; METAL: Tin; ASPHALTother WOODSTONE

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Chesterfield County Courthouse Square, composed of just under two acres of the original tract allocated for the Courthouse site, is located on Iron Bridge Road, State Route 10, at the seat of Chesterfield County. The buildings possessing historic significance that stand upon the square are the Chesterfield County Courthouse, built in 1917; two county clerk's office buildings, dating from 1828 and 1889; the Chesterfield County Jail, constructed in 1892; and a noncontributing structure, the Chesterfield County Historical Society Museum, built in 1976-77 as a replica of Chesterfield County's original 1749 courthouse, which stood on the site of the present courthouse. The 1917 courthouse is a one- and two-story red brick structure that dominates Courthouse Square from its position at the square's center. Built in the Colonial Revival style, it is fronted by a full-height portico, and topped by an octagonal belfry. To the northeast of the courthouse are the clerk's offices. The 1889 clerk's office is closer to the courthouse, and stands one story in height. Just to the northeast of this structure is the 1828 clerk's office, which is also one story tall, but smaller in dimensions than its newer counterpart. Both structures are of red brick. Northwest of the courthouse stands the jail, a compact two-story building of granite ashlar and brick construction. Between the jail and the two clerk's offices, directly behind the courthouse, is the 1976-77 replica of Chesterfield County's 1749 courthouse. It is a one-story brick building constructed in Flemish bond with glazed headers.

Courthouse Square is landscaped with eight mature shade trees over fifty years of age, along with several smaller shade trees planted within the last fifteen years. Two twentieth-century stone monuments, a memorial to Confederate soldiers and a memorial to religious liberty, flank the courthouse to the east and west, respectively. The grounds on the square are traversed by brick walks. Wooden benches line the walk leading to the courthouse entrance, while newer concrete and wood benches stand to the west of the courthouse. Grouped around the Confederate memorial are a collection of Chesterfield County artifacts: two millstones, a petrified log, and a slave auction block. These objects are under the care of the Chesterfield County Historical Society, which has its office and library in the courthouse, and maintains the jail as a museum. The complex of

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1828-1925

Significant Dates

1828

1889

1892

1917

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Vaughan Construction Co., Shawsville, VA

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The courthouses of Virginia occupy a significant place in the architectural and political history of the state and the nation. Spanning four centuries, the commonwealth's courthouse complexes represent a variety of architectural styles and types, as well as different phases in the evolution of republican government at the county, state, and national levels. The group of buildings on Chesterfield County Courthouse Square exemplifies the development of such complexes in Virginia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chesterfield County Courthouse Square served as the center of county government and political life from shortly after the formation of Chesterfield County from Henrico County in 1749, until late in the 1960s. On 7 July 1749, the newly-formed Chesterfield County court met at Varina in Henrico County, and determined the site upon which the Chesterfield County Courthouse should be built. The location selected was near the center of Chesterfield County at the intersection of five roads, not far from a spring located behind Magnolia Grange (built about 1824), and close to an operating ordinary. County law was enforced at Courthouse Square from the beginning, for the construction of a prison and a pillory was provided for at the time of the courthouse's construction. The courthouse was modeled upon the Henrico County Courthouse at Varina. In 1916 the planned demolition of Chesterfield County's 1749 courthouse, which had been the setting for many important trials, instigated an early preservation case. Following the preservationists' unsuccessful effort the present courthouse was built in 1917 on the site of the 1749 courthouse. The other government buildings on Chesterfield County Courthouse Square chronicle the county's municipal architecture from the early nineteenth century. They include the 1828 clerk's office, believed to be the oldest public building in the county; and the 1889 clerk's office, which was constructed as an updated, more commodious, and more elaborate replacement for the earlier clerk's office. Northwest of the courthouse stands the 1892 jail, constructed partly of granite blocks which were apparently taken from an earlier jail on the square that was torn down in 1891. The jail continued in use as an incar-

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Gaines, William H., Jr. "Courthouses of Henrico and Chesterfield." Virginia Cavalcade (Winter 1968): 31-37.
- "General Historical Data Reference to the Present Chesterfield Courthouse Situated on the Site of the Old Courthouse Building that Burned." Source: Board of Supervisors Minute Book No. 5. Typescript, n.d., Chesterfield County Historical Society files.
- Howe, Mary Ellen. "Times Were Different Then." The Messenger of the Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia (Oct. 1982): 5.
- "Jail Again Escapes Fate of Closing Down." Newspaper clipping, n.d., Chesterfield County Historical Society files.
- LaPrade Bros. "Map Showing Property of Chesterfield County at Chesterfield Court House, Virginia." 17 Sept. 1953, revised 6 Mar. 1956. LaPrade Bros., Richmond, VA.
- LaPrade, W. Plats of Chesterfield County Courthouse Square. 11 May 1803. Photocopy in Chesterfield County Historical Society files.

☒ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository:

Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources
221 Governor St., Richmond, VA 23219

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 2 acres

UTM References

A 18 278000 4139370
Zone Easting Northing

C

B
Zone Easting Northing

D

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Chesterfield County Courthouse Square is shown as the dashed line on the accompanying map entitled "Map Showing Property of Chesterfield County at Chesterfield Court House, 1953."

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary defines the property that has historically been considered Chesterfield County Courthouse Square.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Douglas Harnsberger and Susan E. Smead, architectural historians
organization Davis & Harnsberger Assoc./consultant date July 24, 1991
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buildings, monuments, and landscape features represent over a century of municipal architecture and landscaping, ranging in date from the early nineteenth century to 1977 and in architectural style from Federal to Colonial Revival, and they preserve the characteristic qualities of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Virginia's county government centers.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The 1917 Chesterfield County Courthouse is an imposing, one-and two-story structure built of red brick laid in American or common bond, with cast stone detailing. Its dimensions are 48' x 100'. Designed in the Colonial Revival style, it has a T-shaped plan consisting of a two-story front section and a one-story rear section, topped by intersecting gable roofs clad with slate. The courthouse's most striking features are the colossal Roman Doric portico and an octagonal domed belfry. Block modillions, triglyphs, and metopes appear on the heavy cornice of the portico, which has four columns and a concrete floor on a brick base. The belfry atop the courthouse is open, with an arcade around its perimeter that includes Roman Doric columns that support a cornice and are connected by arches with keystones. The five-bay front portion of the building houses two floors of offices. The roof's gabled ends are pedimented, echoing the portico's pediment. Each pediment contains a tripartite semicircular fanlight. There are heavy block modillions supporting the wood cornice that edges the roof of the front section and the taller part of the rear section. Other handsome Colonial Revival features are the centrally-placed paneled wooden double door, topped by a multi-light transom and a pediment that rests upon fluted Doric pilasters, and the brick pilasters with cast stone capitals and bases that encircle the front section and taller rear section of the building. Pilasters appear at the corners of the front and rear sections of the courthouse, at the outer rear corners of the portico, and they are interspersed between the windows along the sides of the taller rear section of the structure. Within the portico the central bay of the facade projects to the depth of the pilasters. Fenestration in the front section of the building consists of six-over-six and four-over-four double-hung wooden sash. The facade has six-over-six sash on both floors, with a paired four-over-four window over the entrance. The side walls feature paired four-over-four sash on both floors. Cast stone jack arches with keystones and cast stone sills define the windows of the front section, and the semicircular fanlights in the end gables have cast stone keystones and sills. Along the side walls of the courthouse's taller rear section, which contains the courtroom, are six-over-six sash with cast stone sills. Above these windows square multi-pane windows with diagonal muntins appear. Each of these windows is framed with the rectangular sash window below it by a course of brickwork, and square cast stone blocks punctuate the upper corners of the framing courses. The two-room section to the rear of the courtroom has

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a simple boxed cornice with returns, and six-over-six double-hung wooden sash windows with cast stone lintels and sills. The courthouse stands upon a brick foundation.

The interior of the courthouse is also Colonial Revival in style. The front entrance opens directly into a wide transverse hall that is flanked by offices and the stairwell, and leads to the courtroom. The courtroom entrance is fitted with paneled double doors. Features common to both the hall and the courtroom are rough-finished plaster walls, paneled wainscoting, and a wooden cornice. In the courtroom mid-twentieth-century modernization was carried out, which included the installation of a dropped tile ceiling. The square windows visible on the exterior of the courtroom portion of the courthouse open into the space above the dropped ceiling. A paneled judge's bench and jury box stand at the front of the courtroom. Bench seats, which were added later, fill the spectators' section of the room. Paneled trim surrounds the six-over-six windows in the courtroom's east and west walls. A broken swan's-neck pediment tops the doors leading into the courtroom from the hall. To each side and behind the judge's bench paneled doors open into two rooms behind the courtroom, that originally functioned as the judge's chambers and a jury room. Now serving as the Chesterfield County Historical Society's library and office, these rooms have rough-finished plaster walls, and Classical Revival door and window surrounds, with fluted doorposts and entablature-like door heads. The same treatment has been given the door openings between the courtroom and the two offices behind it, and between the hall and adjoining offices in the courthouse's front section. Limited modernization has also been carried out in this part of the building, which includes the addition of new wall paneling and the relocation of walls on the second floor.

The oldest building on Courthouse Square is the 1828 clerk's office. Situated about fifty yards northeast of the site of the original Chesterfield County courthouse (where the 1917 courthouse now stands), it is a one-story gable-roofed structure built of red brick laid in Flemish bond, and it originally measured 32' 2" x 20' 4" before its enlargement in this century. It has an asymmetrical three-bay front featuring a central door located between a second door and a window. There is an interior end chimney on the east wall. Originally the building's plan consisted of two rooms, and the unheated west room, accessible through its own entrance, was apparently used for records storage (the interior was remodeled in 1932). There is a twentieth-century rear addition in red brick, and a three-columned, Classical Revival hip-roofed front porch that was also added after 1900. The building's roof, now clad with asphalt shingles, was covered with standing-seam metal in the nineteenth century. It is edged with a boxed cornice. Jack arches, constructed of brick covered with plaster to simulate stone, cap the two front doors.

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In 1889 a new clerk's office was erected several yards to the southwest of the 1828 structure as a replacement for the smaller, older building. Originally T-shaped in plan before the construction of a twentieth-century addition, its outside dimensions were 46' 2" x 45' 1". Like the 1828 clerk's office it is one story in height, and has a gable roof. Constructed of red brick laid in American or common bond, the building is in the Italianate style, and it features a symmetrical five-bay facade that displays a high degree of elaboration. The central bay fronts a gabled projecting entrance vestibule. The transomed entrance has a semicircular louvered opening above it in the gable, which is edged with a parapet that echoes those topping the end walls of the building. The corbelled brick cornice is carried onto the side walls of the entrance vestibule. All of the windows are two-over-two double-hung wooden sash, and they and the entrance are capped with Eastlake-style cast stone hoods. Originally the windows were outfitted with wooden shutters. This building, which provided more space for the clerk's office along with two fireproof vaults for records storage, was joined to the 1828 clerk's office after 1955 by the construction of a hyphen between the clerk's office's rear additions. The interiors of the original sections of the two buildings have been completely renovated for use as municipal offices.

In the northwest corner of Courthouse Square stands the 1892 Chesterfield County jail. At 25' 7" x 31' 1" it is a modest-sized, two-story granite and brick building with a one-story front porch and a hipped roof covered with standing-seam metal. The existing roof, built in 1983, is a reconstruction of the original roof, which was replaced by a flat parapeted roof in the 1930s. The jail was constructed to replace a succession of prison buildings that stood on Courthouse Square. Originally the jail may have been a one-story structure. Its first story is constructed of granite blocks, and there is a dated stone inscribed 1842 located high in the stonework of the front wall. This stone may have come from a smaller stone jail known as the Bastile, apparently built in 1842, that was located in the southeast corner of Courthouse Square and demolished in 1891-92. The dated stone was largely hidden by the jail's original one-story porch that spanned the width of the front, and the stone was exposed in the mid-1930s when a small central entrance portico replaced the porch. A full-width, one-floor porch was reconstructed in 1983, but its design leaves the date stone uncovered. The jail's second floor is built of red brick, laid in American or common bond, and granite blocks frame the windows. The front is three bays wide, and its original asymmetrical arrangement with the entrance in the west bay has been altered to a symmetrical design with a central entrance. The first floor windows are six-over-six, double-hung wooden sash, with the exception of the window on the west end of the north or rear wall. This window and those on the second floor are metal framed, horizontally barred, and fitted with metal grilles.

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Inside the jail both floors initially contained prisoners' cells, with three cells per floor, but the first-floor cells were removed in the 1930s. Presently the first floor houses museum exhibition and storage spaces for the Chesterfield County Historical Society. A small first-floor room in the northwest corner of the building, measuring about 5' x 8', contained the women prisoners' cell. Sheets of metal, joined by metal bands bolted in place, line the walls of this room. This kind of metal wall covering also remains on the second floor. Along the building's west wall concrete steps lead from the first to the second story, which has not been altered since its use as a prison. Here there are three cells, made of metal panels and grillework, outfitted with metal bunks suspended from the cell walls. The mechanism for controlling the cell doors remains in place. The floor on this level is concrete, while the ceiling is constructed of wooden planks. The second floor is presently maintained as part of the Chesterfield County Historical Society's local history exhibit.

Behind the Chesterfield County Courthouse stands the noncontributing Chesterfield County Historical Society Museum building, a reproduction of the 1749 Chesterfield County Courthouse that was erected in 1976-77. This is a one-story, T-plan, gable-roofed structure with a hip-roofed porch spanning the full width of the five-bay facade. Its front section measures 50' 5" x 20' 11", while the rear section, forming the T's stem, measures 21' x 30'. The building's first floor is constructed of red brick laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers, and the gables are sided with wooded clapboards. The roof is clad with wooden shingles, and below it there is a dentilated cornice. There are brick interior end chimneys at each end of the front section. The nine-over-nine, double-hung wooden sash windows on the first floor are segmentally arched, as is the centrally-placed entrance, which features double paneled doors. The loft windows flanking the chimneys in the gable ends are four-over-four double-hung wooden sash. The structure was designed by Carl Morris in collaboration with Landon Perdue.² It was modeled on photos of the original Chesterfield County Courthouse as it appeared in the 1910s, with its gable roof that replaced the original hipped roof in the 1780s, and its modern exhibit areas and facilities for the Chesterfield County Historical Society.

The Chesterfield County Courthouse, the clerk's offices, the jail, and the Chesterfield County Historical Society Museum define the central emphasis and the northern perimeter of Courthouse Square. Along the east and west sides of the square stand county office buildings of red brick, compatible in scale with the Courthouse Square complex. The south edge of the square is bordered by a municipal parking lot located between the square and Route 10. Eight mature shade trees, most well over fifty years of age, stand on the park-like square. Two willow oaks were symmetrically planted in front of the courthouse, while a white oak and a beech also stand

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before the building in the southwest portion of the square. Just to the west of the courthouse is a Dutch elm, and at the east edge of the square, in line with the courthouse's portico, stands a tulip poplar. Two white oaks shade the northeast corner of the square near the clerk's offices. One of these, standing to the southeast of the 1889 clerk's office, is an aged specimen dating from the year 1814. Several deciduous trees have been planted throughout the square within the last fifteen years. Shrubs of various types have been employed as foundation plantings, and also cluster around the two monuments standing on the square. These stone markers stand in the southwest and southeast quarters of the square, roughly aligned with the courthouse's portico. The monument west of the courthouse commemorates religious liberty, and was erected in 1925 in memory of seven Baptist ministers who were imprisoned in the Chesterfield County jail during the 1770s for preaching without a license. The other monument, located east of the courthouse, commemorates the Confederate soldiers of Chesterfield County. Sponsored by a county Monument Executive Committee with John S. Bransford as chairman, the monument was constructed by Mr. Peter Donald, proprietor of the quarries of granite, to whom on September 15, 1902 the contract for the monument's construction was let as "the highest bidding competitor." The monument was unveiled during a ceremony held on September 2, 1903.³ Around the Confederate memorial stands a grouping of Chesterfield County historical artifacts. South of the memorial two millstones, formerly located at Gates Mill on Falling Creek at the Seguire Plantation, were put on display in 1969. A slave auction block and chimney bricks from Physic Hill Plantation, which was located in the Clover Hill District of Chesterfield County, stand to the north of the monument, along with a petrified log taken from the James River. The slave auction block and bricks were placed in the square in 1962, and the petrified log was added in 1964. These items were donated to the Chesterfield County Historical Society.

Walkways made of brick laid in a herringbone pattern connect the buildings on Courthouse Square. Those in front of the courthouse, and leading to the 1889 clerk's office along the courthouse's east side, were in place in 1956. The newer walks are compatible with the older ones in both material and design. Since the late 1950s a concrete sidewalk has been laid along the south edge of Courthouse Square. Part of a flagstone walk, in place in 1956, still lies between the two clerk's offices. Concrete walks have been added in this area of the square since the late 1950s as well. Rows of wooden benches, painted white, were installed in 1958 on each side of the brick walk leading to the courthouse's entrance. To the west of the courthouse two groupings of paired concrete and wood benches were set upon concrete pads next to the brick walk within the last ten years.

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Architecturally the design of the 1917 Chesterfield County Courthouse continues the tradition of Classical Revival style Virginia courthouses that can be traced to the Virginia State Capitol's design. The Roman Revival and Greek Revival styles were popular for courthouse design in Virginia during the nineteenth century. Roman Revival examples include the Old Clark County Courthouse in Berryville, built shortly after 1836, and the Spotsylvania Courthouse, completed in 1840; a Greek Revival example is the 1851 Craig County Courthouse in New Castle. The early twentieth-century popularity of the Classical Revival offered conditions that allowed the choice of a Classical Revival design for the new Chesterfield County Courthouse to match contemporary tastes, while continuing the stylistic tradition of Virginia county courthouses. A Classical design was also selected for the Augusta County Courthouse in Staunton, completed in 1901. An exception to the Virginia courthouse design tradition is the Pulaski County Courthouse in Pulaski, a large structure built to house all of the county offices, and one of the few public buildings in Virginia that reflect the influence of the Romanesque style of H. H. Richardson. Chesterfield County Courthouse Square is also in keeping with Virginia's traditional treatment of county public buildings and their settings, characterized by a centrally-placed courthouse ringed by smaller municipal buildings, monuments, and mature landscaping.

SES/DJH

NOTES

¹Courthouse Square was two acres in size in 1803 (W. LaPrade, Plats of Chesterfield County Courthouse Square, 11 May 1803, photocopy in Chesterfield County Historical Society files). It now contains 1.96 acres.

²Calder Loth initially suggested the idea of constructing a duplicate of the 1749 courthouse for use as a museum, rather than erecting a modern building.

³This information is available in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, 30 August 1903.

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ceration facility until 1962. Courthouse Square's newest building, the noncontributing Chesterfield County Historical Society Museum, is a 1976-77 reconstruction of the 1749 courthouse as it appears in early-twentieth-century photos. Courthouse Square's grounds provide a park-like setting for this complex of buildings, located on State Route 10, just to the northeast of the intersection of Route 10 and Lori Road, State Route 655. Fairly recent, controlled development has occurred around the square and along Route 10, which includes the addition of newer municipal buildings. Across Route 10 stands Magnolia Grange, which is operated as a house museum by the Chesterfield County Historical Society.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Chesterfield County Courthouse Square was established as the governmental and political center of Chesterfield County on 7 July 1749, during the second meeting of the county court at Varina in Henrico County. One month earlier, Chesterfield County had been created by an Act of Assembly from that part of Henrico County that lay south of the James River. The new county was named after Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth earl of Chesterfield, whose political career reached its peak shortly before the formation of Chesterfield County, and who was also famous for his courtly manners. During the July 1749 meeting the Chesterfield County court determined the site for the new county's courthouse, and John Booker was hired to "build a courthouse, prison and pillory" for the sum of £500, "to be delivered up complete by the first day of October 1750."¹ Booker was instructed to model the courthouse on the Henrico County Courthouse at Varina, except the floor of Chesterfield County's courthouse was to be of plank. The new courthouse was constructed of red brick using Flemish bond with glazed headers, with a symmetrical five-bay facade and a hipped roof. The T plan that the building exhibited by the early nineteenth century may have been added in 1800.² The function of Chesterfield County Courthouse Square as the center of the administration and enforcement of county law was established from the beginning by the construction of a jail and a pillory adjoining the courthouse. The continuity and development of these roles past the mid-twentieth century is illustrated by the complex of buildings now standing on the square.

Chesterfield County's 1749 courthouse served for an almost continuous 167-year span into the early twentieth century, excepting a five-year period between 1871 and 1876 when court was held at Manchester. In 1876 the decision to return the court to Chesterfield was determined by popular vote, and the 1749 courthouse was reoccupied by the county court.³ Other than some exterior alteration, the building stood little changed from its original appearance. A gable roof replaced the hipped roof after the courthouse was set on fire by British General William Phillips during his march through Chesterfield in April 1781, and in the late nineteenth century a front porch was added.⁴

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Several important cases were heard during the Chesterfield County courthouse's years of use. Among these were the trials of seven Baptist preachers accused during a four-year period between 1770 and 1774 of disobeying ecclesiastical law. Two of the transgressors, John Tanner and John Weatherford, were apprehended on 15 May 1773 and charged with preaching and assembling people without a license. Weatherford was apparently incarcerated for five months, during which time he preached from his cell window. Two preachers who were imprisoned before him in the Chesterfield County jail, William Webber and Joseph Anthony, who were arrested on 4 January 1771 for preaching without a license, gave sermons twice weekly from the prison windows during their three-month period of imprisonment. The last Baptist preacher held in the Chesterfield County jail was David Tinsley, who was jailed for over four months in 1774.⁵ A monument to the seven Baptist ministers was erected on Courthouse Square in 1925.

In the nineteenth century two highly-publicized murder trials were heard at Chesterfield County Courthouse. Thomas Ritchie, Jr., editor of the Richmond Enquirer, was acquitted in 1846 of killing John Hampden Pleasants, editor of the Whig and the New Compiler, during a duel that was precipitated by a conflict over abolitionism. In 1852 John S. Wormley, a well-to-do planter, was hanged on Courthouse Square for murdering his son-in-law. The early twentieth century saw the trial of a wealthy Manchester businessman, Henry Beattie, charged with murdering his wife. Found guilty in 1911, he was sentenced to death.⁶

Five years later, in 1916, Chesterfield County officials moved to replace the 1749 courthouse with a larger and more modern structure. In so doing they touched off one of the earliest recorded preservation cases in Virginia. This movement, headed by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Chesterfield County resident Dr. A. J. Hurt, and a group of Confederate veterans,⁷ proved unsuccessful. In 1917 the old courthouse was demolished.

On 5 February the Chesterfield Board of Supervisors reviewed bids for the construction of a new county courthouse, and awarded the contract to the lowest bidder, Vaughan Construction, of Shawsville, Virginia. The architect of the courthouse is not known. In April 1918 the board designated a committee to purchase furniture for the courthouse, which was to be delivered by 1 May. J. B. Watkins was hired in June 1918 as a landscape gardener, and charged with laying off walks and a driveway on the Courthouse Square grounds. Final payment was made to Vaughan Construction Company on 9 December 1918.⁸ The new courthouse's cornerstone had been laid in October 1917, during a dedication ceremony that included an all-day picnic attended by several hundred area citizens. On Courthouse Square about one hundred men, drafted for service in World War I, were camped as they awaited transfer to training stations.

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Architecturally the complex of buildings on Chesterfield County Courthouse Square represents the changing needs and characteristics of the county from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. Ranging from the simple Federal-style 1828 clerk's office to the imposing 1917 Colonial Revival courthouse, the square's municipal structures reflect the county's growth, the increased responsibilities of county government, and a heightening concern for government buildings rendered with greater stylistic development. This latter interest contrasts with the conservatism and pragmatism that allowed the 1749 courthouse to function in its original capacity for a century and a half, and caused the other municipal buildings to be retained for government service in largely unaltered condition well into the twentieth century.

The 1828 clerk's office was built to augment the office and storage space available in Chesterfield County's 1749 courthouse. If the courthouse's T plan was original, the building probably contained a clerk's office and jury rooms in the front portion, with the courtroom occupying the stem of the T. The construction of the two-room clerk's office provided an unheated records storage room and an office heated by a fireplace, which served in their original capacity for over seventy years (as late as the 1910s, the office still had an open fireplace as its only source of heat).¹⁰ In 1889 the newer clerk's office was built. With a T plan like the 1749 courthouse, it was given a more elaborate architectural treatment than its older counterpart, and it contained more office space along with two records storage rooms. This building was occupied by the county clerk until 1958, when it was given over to other county departments.

In the northwest corner of Chesterfield County Courthouse Square, the county jail, which replaced earlier jails that had held among their inmates the Baptist preachers imprisoned in the early 1770s, served in its original role until the mid-twentieth century. Each floor contained three cells when the jail was built, and each cell was designed to hold four prisoners, for a total capacity of twenty-four. Heat came from wood stoves, oil lamps lighted the interior, and there was no running water. According to a 1909 inspection report, the building, which was deemed to have "inadequate ventilation", did at least make "provision . . . for the separation of sexes, the insane, and children." There was "no recreation; religious services very seldom; prisoners are not employed."¹² Food for the prisoners was cooked in the home of a jail worker, and two meals were served daily.¹³ The jail was little-used well into the twentieth century because of Chesterfield's low crime rate. Perhaps due to its lack of use the building fell into disrepair, allowing several prisoners to escape in 1936 by removing decayed planks from the second floor ceiling and cutting through the tin roof. Following this incident the original hipped roof was replaced by a flat parapeted roof (the hipped roof was reconstructed in 1983). Other 1930s renovations included transfer of the front

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entrance from the left bay of the three-bay facade to the center, and the replacement of the door opening with a window. Also, apparently at this time the first-floor cells were removed to provide space for the County police department. Soon the jail was not adequate to hold Chesterfield County's prisoners, necessitating their incarceration in the Henrico County jail in Richmond on a contractual arrangement. The Chesterfield County jail became merely a temporary holding facility.¹⁴

Chesterfield County's 1917 courthouse, although much larger and stylistically more elaborate than the 1749 courthouse, follows the same general configuration of the earlier building. The newer courthouse has a T plan, with offices intended for the county sheriff and his staff, the commonwealth's attorney, and the trial justice in the front section. The courtroom fills the stem of the T, and rises almost through the full height of the building. Behind the courtroom a two-room extension houses the judge's chambers and a jury room,¹⁵ now used as an office and a library by the Chesterfield County Historical Society.

The 1917 courthouse's construction created a monumental presence on Courthouse Square. Its erection was an early reflection of Chesterfield County's gradually increasing rate of growth in the early twentieth century, which continued in the years after World War II. The complex of municipal buildings on Courthouse Square, sited on landscaped grounds, provides an architectural focus within the fairly new development that has occurred nearby, as Chesterfield County's population has continued to expand in the last few decades. The historically significant features of each of the buildings on the square have remained largely intact, and together they represent an important and well-preserved group of local government buildings from nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Virginia.

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NOTES

¹ Francis Earle Lutz, Chesterfield: An Old Virginia County (Richmond, VA: William Byrd Press, Inc., 1954) 88-89.

² Jeffrey M. O'Dell, Chesterfield County: Early Architecture and Historic Sites (Chesterfield, VA [Chesterfield County Planning Dept., c. 1983]) 373.

³ Lutz, 282; William H. Gaines, Jr., "Courthouses of Henrico and Chesterfield," Virginia Cavalcade Winter 1986: 36.

⁴ O'Dell, 373.

⁵ Lutz, 98-99.

⁶ O'Dell, 373-74.

⁷ Ibid., 374.

⁸ "General Historical Data Reference to the Present Chesterfield Courthouse Situated on the Site of the Old Courthouse Building that Burned," Source: Board of Supervisors Minute Book No. 5. Typescript, n.d., Chesterfield County Historical Society files.

⁹ O'Dell, 376-77.

¹⁰ Ibid., 375.

¹¹ Waverly Winfree, "The Old Jail," The Messenger of the Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia Oct. 1982: 1-4.

¹² Mary Ellen Howe, "Times Were Different Then," The Messenger of the Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia Oct. 1982: 5.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Winfree, 2.

¹⁵ O'Dell, 376.

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9. Major Bibliographic References, con.

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- Street, Elwood. "Chesterfield Courthouse: A Wellspring of Democracy in Government in Virginia." Richmond Times-Dispatch, 30 Aug. 1942, Chesterfield County Historical Society files.
- Weaver, Bettie Woodson, editor and compiler. Chesterfield County, Virginia. [N.p.] 1957.
- Winfrey, Waverly. "The Old Jail." The Messenger of the Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia (Oct. 1982): 1-4.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

All photos are of: Structures on Chesterfield County Courthouse
Square
Chesterfield, Chesterfield County, VA
DHL File # 20227

CREDIT: Mark E. Van Atter
DATE: 1991

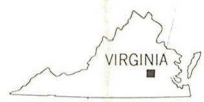
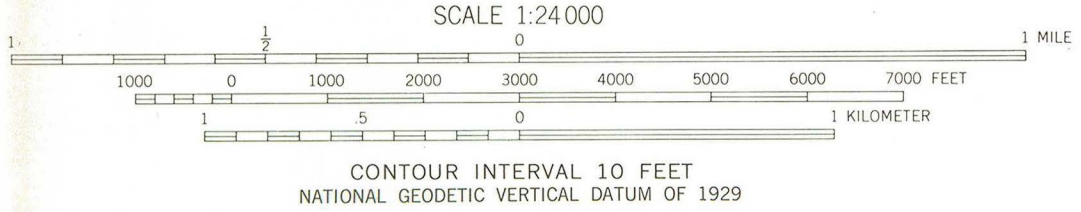
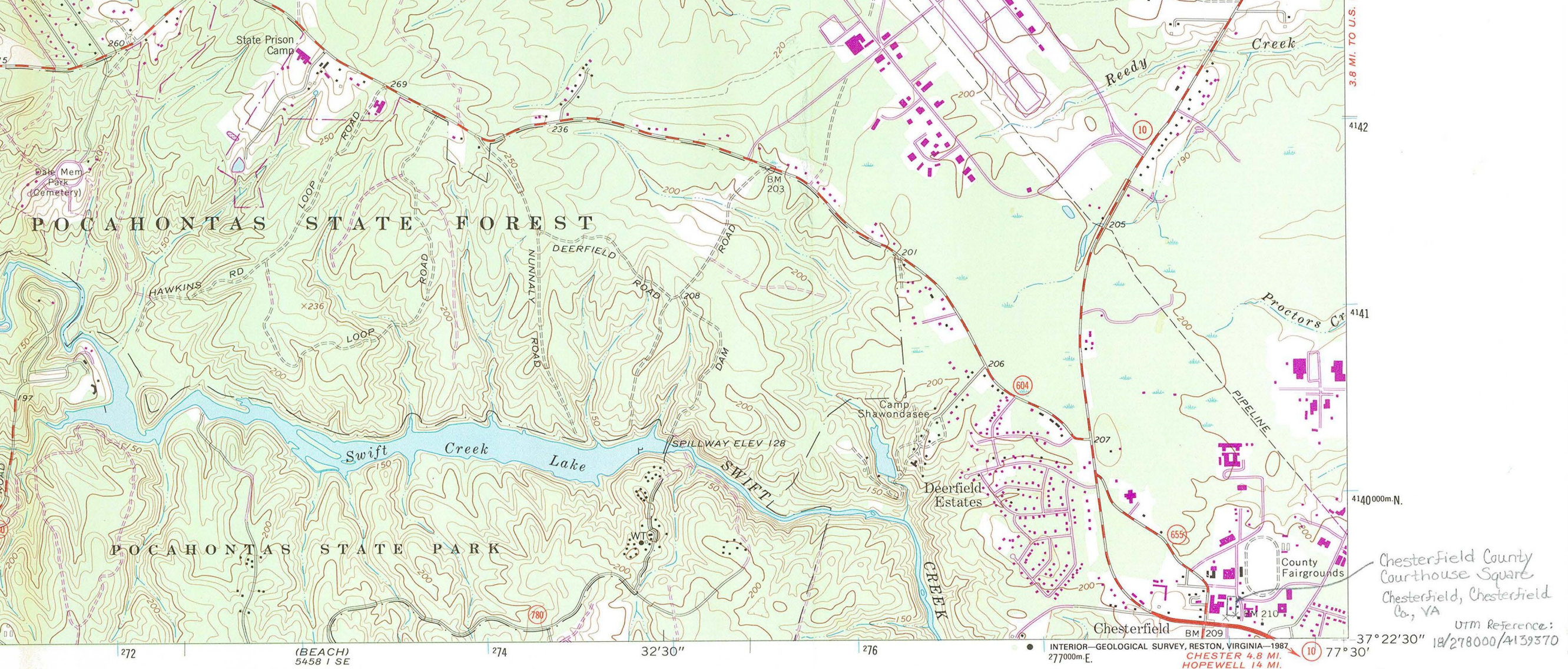
1. VIEW OF: Courthouse, 1889 Clerk's Office, and confederate monument-south and east elevations of courthouse, and south elevation of clerk's office; view looking northwest.
NEG. NO.: 11297
PHOTO 1 of 15
2. VIEW OF: Courthouse-east and north elevations; view looking southwest.
NEG. NO.: 11297
PHOTO 2 of 15
3. VIEW OF: Courthouse-west elevation; view looking southeast.
NEG. NO.: 11297
PHOTO 3 of 15
4. VIEW OF: Courthouse-interior-courtroom; south (rear) wall; view looking south.
NEG. NO.: 11296
PHOTO 4 of 15
5. VIEW OF: Courthouse-interior-courtroom; north (front) wall with judge's bench; view looking north.
NEG. NO.: 11296.
PHOTO 5 of 15
6. VIEW OF: 1889 clerk's office-south and east elevations; view looking northwest.
NEG. NO.: 11297
PHOTO 6 of 15
7. VIEW OF: 1828 clerk's office-south and east elevations; view looking northwest.
NEG. NO.: 11297
PHOTO 7 of 15

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8. VIEW OF: 1828 and 1889 clerk's offices-north and west elevations; view looking southeast.
NEG. NO.: 11297
PHOTO 8 of 15
9. VIEW OF: Jail-west and south elevations; view looking northeast.
NEG. NO.: 11297
PHOTO 9 of 15
10. VIEW OF: Jail-east and north elevations; view looking southwest.
NEG. NO.: 11297
PHOTO 10 of 15.
11. VIEW OF: Jail-interior-second-floor cells; view looking northeast.
NEG. NO.: 11296
PHOTO 11 of 15.
12. VIEW OF: Chesterfield County Historical Society museum-west and south elevations; view looking northeast. (NC)
NEG. NO.: 11297
PHOTO 12 of 15
13. VIEW OF: Chesterfield County Historical Society museum-north elevation; view looking south. (NC)
NEG. NO.: 11297
PHOTO 13 of 15
14. VIEW OF: Baptist memorial; view looking north.
NEG. NO.: 11297
PHOTO 14 of 15
15. VIEW OF: 1889 and 1828 clerk's offices, and confederate monument and mill stones (NC)-south elevations; view looking north.
NEG. NO.: 11296
PHOTO 15 of 15

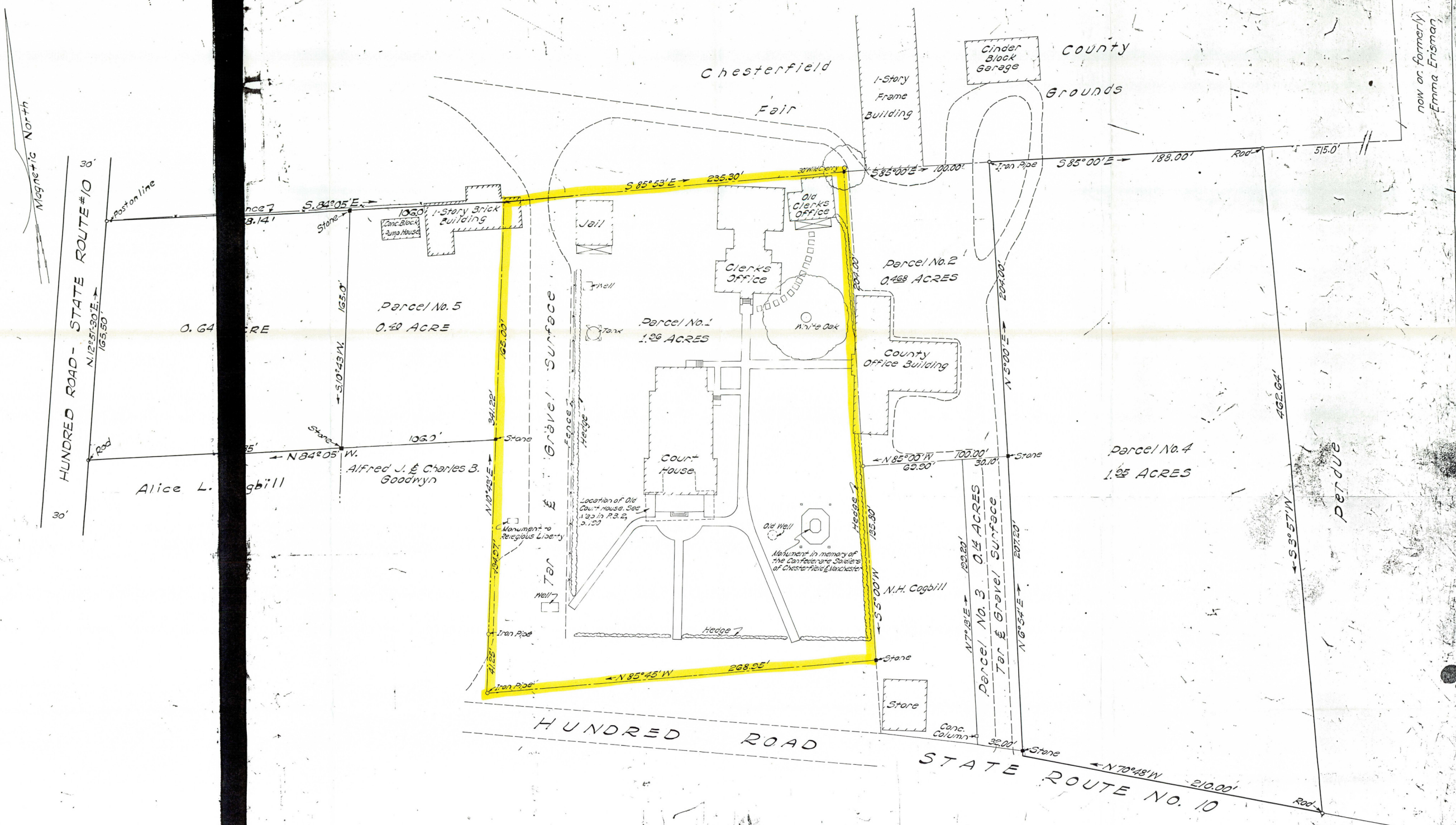


Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with Commonwealth of Virginia agencies from aerial photographs taken 1984 and other sources. This information not field checked Map edited 1987

CHESTERFIELD, VA.
37077-D5-TF-024

1963
PHOTOREVISED 1987

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
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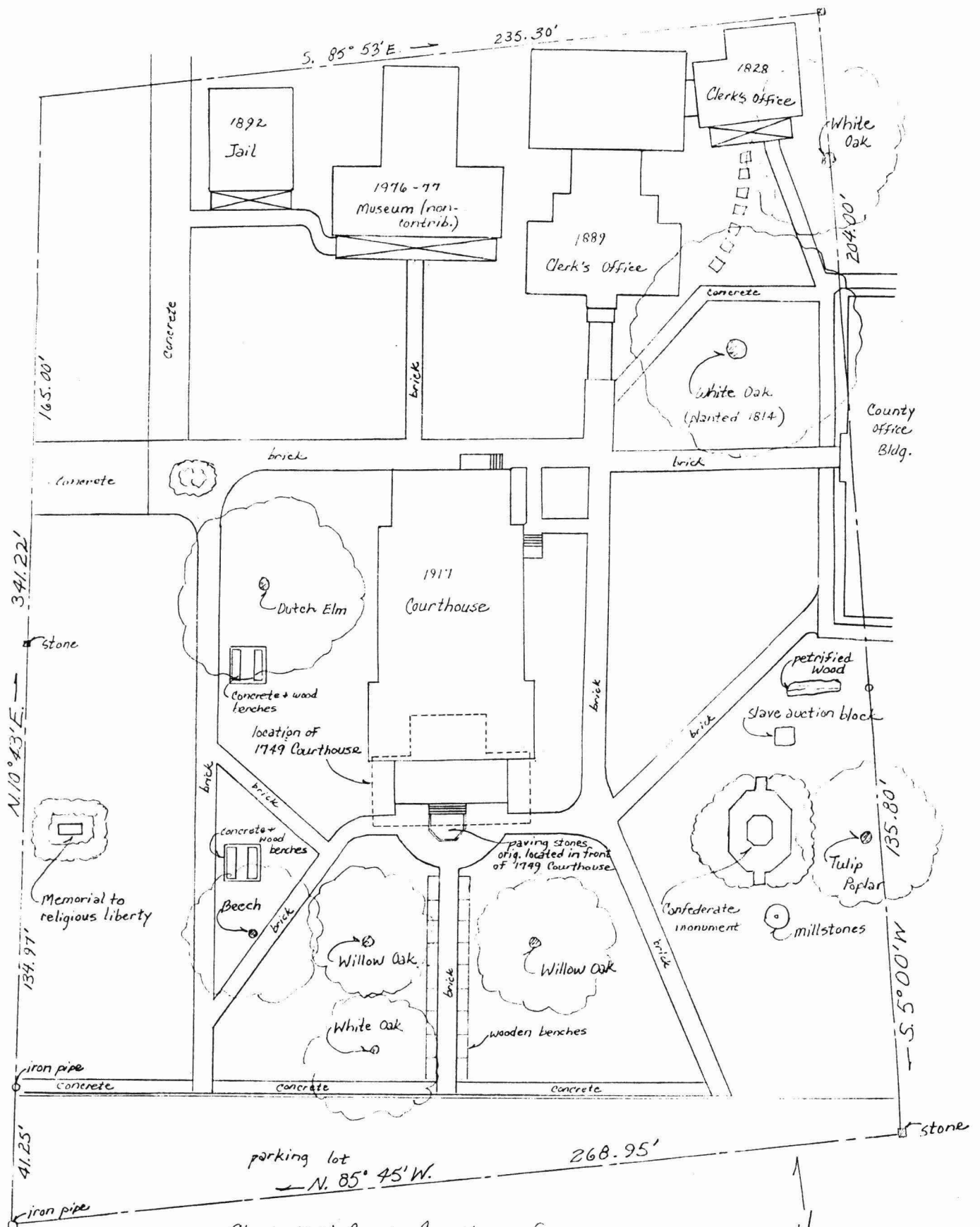


NOTE:
 The strip of land lying between the County Courthouse Square and the public road known as the Hundred Road or Route No. 10, declared to be a public roadway. See Board of Supervisors Minute Book No. 7, Page No. 285.

MAP
 SHOWING PROPERTY OF
 CHESTERFIELD COUNTY
 AT
 CHESTERFIELD COURT HOUSE
 VIRGINIA
 September 17, 1953
 Revised Mar. 6, 1956
 W.W. LaPrade & Bros.
 Civil Engineers
 Richmond, Va.

FB#683

now or formerly
 Emma Erismar



Chesterfield County Courthouse Square,
 Chesterfield, VA
 not to scale 7/2/91 SES